

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 /072 W

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7807

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 0413

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV PINS SREF LA UR VN

SUBJECT: UNPRECEDENTED JOINT MEETING OF ASSEMBLY AND CABINET

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. LAO PARTY NEWSPAPER MARCH 1 REPORTED THAT SUPREME PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY AND CABINET HAD HELD JOINT MEETING IN VIENTIANE FROM FEBRUARY 18 TO 28 UNDER CHAIRMANSHIP OF PRESIDENT SOUPHANOUVONG. I N ATTENDANCE WERE PRIMIN KAYSONE PHOMVIHANE, ADVISOR TO GOVERNMENT "PRINCE SOUVANNA PHOUMA", AND ALL THE VICE PRESIDENTS OF THE SPA, VICE PRIMINS, AND SPA AND CABINET MEMBERS.

2. ARTICLE CONTINUED THAT KAYSONE HAD REPORTED ON RESULTS ON CARRYING OUT GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM IN PERIOD OF MORE THAN A YEAR SINCE ESTABLISHMENT OF LPDR. HE EXPLAINED THE PROGRESS THAT HAD BEEN MADE AND POINTED OUT SOME DIFFICULTIES WHICH WOULD CONTINUE TO BE RESOLVED IN THE FUTURE.

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3. IT ADDED THAT EVERY DAY THE INTERNAL SITUATION OF THE COUNTRY WAS GETTING BETTER AND THE WORLD SITUATION BECOMING MORE FAVORABLE FOR THE LAO REVOLUTION. IN THE LIGHT OF THIS, KAYSONE RAISED A NUMBER OF BASIC PROBLEMS REGARDING THE POLICIES OF BUILDING THE COUNTRY FOR MANY YEARS IN THE FUTURE. HE THEN PROPOSED A

NUMBER OF WORK PROGRAMS FOR 1977 WHICH WERE STUDIED
AND UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED BY THE JOINT SESSION. END
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4. DURING THE PAST WEEK, SOME DIPLOMATIC AND LAO
SOURCES SUGGESTED THAT THE SPA MIGHT BE CONVENED, AND
THERE WAS ONE REPORT THAT THE FORMER KING HAD ARRIVED
IN VIENTIANE FROM LUANG PRABANG, POSSIBLY IN CONNEC-
TION WITH SUCH A MEETING. SOURCES SAID THAT HIGH
LEVEL DISCUSSIONS WERE GOING ON ABOUT POSSIBLE SHIFTS
IN GOVERNMENT POLICY TO MEET GROWING POPULAR
DISSATISFACTION WITH THE REGIME.

5. LPDR LEADERS WERE REPORTEDLY PARTICULARLY CONCERNED
ABOUT INCREASING NUMBERS OF REFUGEES FLEEING TO
THAILAND, INCLUDING SOME SENIOR MILITARY AND CIVILIAN
OFFICIALS. THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN REPORTS THAT WIDE-
SPREAD INSURGENT ACTIVITY WAS INCREASING AND OF
CONTINUING OPPOSITION TO THE AGRICULTURAL TAX, WITH
THE AUTHORITIES DECIDING IN SOME CASES NOT TO COLLECT
THE TAX OR TO RETURN AT LEAST SOME OF THE PRODUCE
WHICH HAD BEEN COLLECTED.

6. THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN INDICATIONS OF POPULAR DIS-
SATISFACTION WITH THE PRESENCE OF VIETNAMESE TROOPS IN
THE COUNTRY. A WESTERN BUSINESSMAN AND LAO SOURCE
SEPARATELY TOLD US THAT ANTI-GOVERNMENT LEAFLETS WERE
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DISTRIBUTED LAST WEEK NEAR VIENTIANE AIRPORT, AND THE
BUSINESSMAN SAID THEY ATTACKED KAYSONE AS VIETNAMESE.

7. BUSINESSMAN ALSO SAID LAO SOURCE TOLD HIM THAT LAO MECHANICS HAD
DEMONSTRATED THEIR DISPLEASURE WITH SOVIET DOMINATION
BY THROWING A GRENADE AT SOVIET AN-24 PROVIDED TO LAO
WHICH WAS PARKED AT VIENTIANE AIRPORT.

8. FRENCH DIPLOMAT SAID HE HAD BEEN TOLD THAT ONE
DECISION TAKEN AT SPA MEETING WAS CANCELLATION OF
AGRICULTURAL TAX.

9. COMMENT: THE SPA MEETING WAS THE FIRST SINCE THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LPJR IN DECEMBER 1975. THE
DURATION OF THE SESSION FOR ELEVEN DAYS INDICATES THAT
THE PARTICIPANTS HAD PLENTY TO TALK ABOUT. THE
REFERENCE IN THE PARTY NEWSPAPER TO "DIFFICULTIES" AND
"PROBLEMS" REMAINING TO BE RESOLVED IS A CANDID
ADMISSION BY THE REGIME THAT THEY EXIST. THE VERY

FACT THAT THE SPA MET AND THE PRIMIN PERSONALLY
REPORTED TO IT ON THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM SEEMS TO
HAVE BEEN AN EFFORT BY THE PARTY LEADERS TO PROVIDE A
PSEUDO-DEMOCRATIC FACADE TO THEIR ABSOLUTE RULE OF THE
COUNTRY.
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